/90 cont./

583 584 [593] 196. To constitute a family, in general, no other thing is influential except the mutual inclination of the parties and their complete freedom; in such a way that marriages are frequently made against the will of the parents, sometimes on trips or in distant rancherias and even with individuals of a different tribe; and that the return of a son or a daughter, after a long absence, to his or her parents, introducing to them the new daughter-in-law or new son-in-law, which so often appears in stories, is a faithful transcription of real life.

583 606 Material interest then customarily flourishes on the lips of the woman's progenitors with respect to their son-in-law, since they consider him to have benefitted (as in fact he has) through the acquisition of the daughter raised by them with so much work, and as a consequence they usually ask him to help them in their chores or in the building of houses; but from this it should not be inferred that this is a matter of purchase-sale nor of inferiority of the woman.

621 622 ●643 [651] 197. Concerning the lack of ultra-family organization, the so often cited Juan Pimentel says in his geographic report of Caracas Province the following: "There are not nor has it been possible to confirm that in all this province of Caracas there have been any caciques or lords of estate or seigniory, nor do they pay tribute to anyone."

105 [622] And more extensively he says in Chapter 15: "The natives of this province did not have nor do they have any government or police in matters of justice nor in anything which resembles this; it is all personal independence, for as there are not, nor have there been, caciques or lords, they have not had anyone [264] to obey, and thus Peter is as good as his master; because when they eat they get together by house or barrios, and the first to stick in his hand might be the lowest rather than his better, [554] and the boy rather than the old man; for among them there is 756 neither superiority nor betterness by way of lineage nor in any other respect; except that, if in some way there is some respected Indian, it is by way of being a piache, as has been said,

[p. 214]

SOCIAL CULTURE

Organization

648 [131] The country of the Kamarakotos is in the State of Bolívar, District Piar, of which the capital is Upata. No one disputes these attributions or the territorial and civil authority of the corresponding Venezuelan officials, the Indians themselves being agreeably submissive to Venezuelan authority as far as they 648 are aware of it. In fact, however, no effort has ever been made to extend 643 Venezuelan law or customs to them, no governmental agency is regularly in contact with them, and there are no local officials beyond the fact that Alejo [178] Calcaño's de facto authority in the tribe is officially recognized. Since he was regularly made tribal chief, or cacique, by the Indians themselves, this flavor of legality does not alter the fact that the Indian tribal organization, such as it is, is intact and that they are still living in a state of virtually complete independence with no reference to any laws or customs but their own.

571 171 178 The social organization among most of the Indians of this broad region is very loose, with few formal offices or ceremonies. The Caribs in general seem seldom to have had any very elaborate or rigid form of government and the great simplicity of the society of those of this region may be correlated with their living in small, rather isolated family groups and with the lack of necessity, in recent years, for uniting and organizing for any important cooperative undertaking, such as war.

592 621 The social unit is the family group, consisting of all the persons living at one place. This may include more than one married man with his family and if so the two or more natural families that fall into the single Kamarakoto social family unit are frequently but not necessarily related. For instance, at Uruyén there are two adult males with families, one of whom is married to the sister of the other. They live in different houses but constitute, in the Kamarakoto sense, a single family group. Quite unrelated persons may, with

592 621 permission of the family head, be accepted into such a family group. Such persons are not adopted in any formal way, nor are they considered to be relatives if they are not so by blood or marriage, but they are, on sufferance, integral members of the household and subject to its habits and discipline.

592 622 Such a group always has a single head, who is an adult, married, able-bodied man. He is not necessarily the oldest man in the group, but acquires his status by natural force of character, by being the first to settle at that particular spot, or the like. There is no formal election or selection of such a group-leader, who is called to⁹-esa⁹, but we could not learn that any misunderstandings, friction, or defiance had ever resulted from the informality of the [621] system. If another male member of the group is dissatisfied with his subordinate position, he is free at any time to move away and start his own group as its to⁹-esa⁹, and this occasionally happens.

The authority of such a headman or local group-leader is almost exactly analogous in form and substance to that of the male head of a family in most [578] European societies. The family spirit is friendly and co-operative, seldom involving any friction or discipline, and in general the status of the to⁹-esa⁹ is only that of a leader among equals. His opinion is the most valued and he is looked to for decisions and leadership in matters involving the family group as [183] a whole. He is responsible for seeing that necessities are provided, and if need be toward this end he orders the labors of the others, but in general their duties are so well understood and so willingly undertaken by all that an "order" in any stringent sense is hardly necessary.

631 643 It is evident that many Indians of the region recognize or are aware of no authority beyond the very local one of their respective to⁹-esa⁹. Within the central group there is, however, a chief who is formally recognized as such by all the local households and who exercises a general supervision over the tribal 643 group superior to the local autonomy of the to⁹-esa⁹. This official is called teburu (or tepuru), which may be rendered as cacique (or perhaps more nearly in accord with coloquial Venezuelan, "capitán," although from a broader point [191] of view "cacique" is a better word). At present the cacique of the tribe is Alejo-Calcaño, a full-blooded member of the tribe although he is one of the two or three who speak Spanish and who have spent some time in Venezuelan towns.

The authority of the cacique over the various different households is almost exactly analogous to that of a to⁹-esa⁹ over the members of a single household. It rests on prestige, custom, and consent rather than on force or on any formulated legal basis or religious theory. His office is not hereditary in principle, although sometimes so in fact, and rests on no supernatural designation, ordeal, or other mode of selection beyond informal consent. Tenure is for life and on the death of a cacique a new one is chosen by discussion and agreement, without any set form of election or anything resembling a tribal parliament.

643 When I asked what would happen if the Indians could not agree on any one per-
[57] son as cacique, my question seemed hardly to be understood. "We do agree; we are good; we do not fight." After such assertions, it was finally said that if some to⁹-esa⁹, or several of them, resolutely demanded a different chief the teburu would appoint one for them (he would be called to⁹-epuru⁹), but their chief would be subordinate to the teburu. In fact no such case has arisen in recent times and there are no such subordinate chiefs at present.

645 It is, however, customary for the cacique to delegate some of his functions to a vice-cacique or sub-cacique, called teburu- (or tepuru-) ɛsi-yakon (the exact meaning of ɛsi is not clear to me, compare esa in to⁹-esa⁹, but yakon is "his younger brother" and gives a sufficient clue to the sense of the phrase). This is not a fixed or generally recognized office, but merely one that may be constituted if the cacique desires. The teburu-ɛsi-yakon may, for instance, be sent on official errands to convey the wishes of the teburu or may represent
[129] the latter in his absence. At present this function is fulfilled by Antonio Montesdeoca, nephew of Alejo Calcaño, who served as my interpreter during
645 most of this work. Although no such explicit statement was made, it is obvious
643 that Alejo has trained and is grooming Antonio as his successor and it is agreed that the evident wishes of the old cacique in such a matter weigh heavily in
[177] the selection of a new cacique. It was also stated that the wish for and the fact of growing contacts with the outer world make it desirable (Antonio says "necessary") to have a Spanish-speaking teburu, which at present automatically makes Antonio the only possible candidate, although Alejo is by no means an old man and his successor will probably not take office for many years, by which time the whole system may have collapsed if the present rate of change continues.

[756] The cacique is not a shaman, or piache, at present or usually (nor is the probable successor of the present cacique) and this is neither a requirement nor
756 a recommendation for this office. The piaches, of whom there are several, are specialists in their own field, having nothing to do with the government of
[622] the tribe. Unlike so many Indian societies, the shaman is here entirely non-political and has no civil authority or influence beyond that entailed in the fact that he is ordinarily also a to⁹-esa⁹.

643 The cacique is respected and may be given first choice in the division of
[161] benefits, but he receives no emolument in labor or in goods and in the thoroughly democratic, individualistic society he is merely another, although an out-
[692] standing, individual. His duties are equally vague and light. He arbitrates what few interhousehold disputes occur, represents the tribe in contacts with others or with the Venezuelans, directs community undertakings and generally acts as the father of his people. We saw no instance when his orders were disobeyed and were told that none occur, but his orders are, in fact, hardly more than persuasive presentation of his wishes and opinions.

643 631 The extent of this authority, such as it is, is most ill-defined. It does not clearly and definitely extend beyond the central group of the Kamarakotos and even here many of the Indians never have practical occasion to recognize it, although none would deny it. The Kamarakotos and Kamarakoto-like Indians of the Caroní and other more remote parts are aware of the cacique only when they have occasion to visit the central group. They appear to have no cacique of their own and those that did visit the central group during our stay verbally recognized the authority of this cacique. He submits that his authority does extend widely into this outer region (with which he himself was almost entirely unacquainted until our visit) but in fact his power there is not even nominal. Even in this extremely attenuated way, it is completely false to speak of him as in authority over all the Arekunas, including those of the Gran Sabana and the Taurepánes, although this was claimed for him. The Arekunas as a whole do not have any one chief, and many of them acknowledge no authority [619] outside their own settlements. It would be improper to speak of an Arekuna tribe, since the Arekunas are not an integrated unit, either ethnically or politically, but an agglomeration of small, physically and culturally related but quite distant groups.

562 622 643 171 Schomburgk speaks of (uncommon) cases of female chiefs among the Makuchi. Among the Kamarakotos no woman is ever a chief, either over a household or over a larger group, although otherwise women are by no means treated as inferior beings.

Relationship Concepts

602 601 114 As with many primitive peoples, concepts of family relationships in Kamarakoto are more complex than in nations of European origin, are more specific, and rest on a different basis. Most vocabularies, including even the unusually fine Taurepán vocabulary of Koch-Grünberg, give an imperfect idea of these relationships. This is usually because the investigator tends to seek the Indian equivalents of the words of his own language, a system adequate for obtaining names of objects and for many other purposes but quite inadequate when, as with relationships, the concepts expressed in the two languages are [128] far from being the same. The following carefully checked information was obtained in several different interviews by postulating many different sorts of family groups and asking what each individual in the group would call each other [128] individually. This is a field in which an outside investigator could probably never achieve absolutely complete knowledge, at least not without many years of actual membership in the tribe, but the following account is believed to be nearly complete and essentially correct. Comparisons are made chiefly with

595 dawning consciousness of Christian folk-customs, but it was evident that the
[177] majority of men had only one wife and none was surely determined to have more
● 643] than six. The cacique, although in general his tendency is to lead the tribe in-
to more Europeanized ways, has several wives.

586 A man has the right to eject an unsatisfactory wife and a wife has the right
to leave a man and in both cases the marriage is automatically and completely
[581] dissolved. These statements were so fully confirmed that the situation is no
doubt a known one, but the Indians always added that husbands and wives do not,
in fact, separate. From our own observations and records it cannot be doubted
587 that marriages are normally permanent. Widowers and widows remarry at will
and without restriction. I could not learn that a widow was expected to, or
normally did, marry her husband's brother, as occurs among some primitive
peoples, but there is no restriction against this if it is desired.

582 There does not appear to be any strong feeling regarding incest. It is
doubtful whether marriages between relatives of the first degree, brother and
sister or parent and child, occur, but marriages of first cousins (although by no
means obligatory, as in some tribes) are certainly permissible and so are mar-
riages of uncle and niece and aunt and nephew. There is thus no requirement
of exogamy (even first-degree incest is not absolutely rejected on moral grounds)
and there is an equal absence of obligatory endogamy, marriages with members
of other tribes are uncommon, because of lack of opportunity, but do occur
582 and are not considered abnormal or reprehensible in any way. Marriages with
563 Venezuelans have twice occurred, without any evident strong feeling, but there
was some tendency to deprecate them and it is curious that these two unions,
684 among all those on which we checked, were the only childless ones. From
563 rumor or gossip, not accurate information but probably with some basis, it ap-
pears that more casual cohabitation with Venezuelans (or other non-Indians) is,
however, bitterly resented and that the offending outsiders have in at least one
case been put to death.

589 There are very few unmarried adult females. Among the Indians definite-
848 ly recorded, only one adult female was unmarried, and she had a child, a fact
not considered particularly discreditable to her or disabling to the child. That
[582] illegitimacy is so uncommon can be ascribed rather to early and almost univer-
sal marriage than to any moral reason.

582 Child-marriage was formerly common among some related tribes (although
[17] usually not consummated until puberty — another point emphasizing that the
[581] basis of marriage is not exclusively and perhaps not primarily sexual). It ap-
parently does not now occur among Kamarakotos among whom the girls appear
commonly to marry two or three years after the first onset of puberty.

589 All the older men are married, apparently without exception. Although
595 polygamy is far from universal, it is common enough to make the number of
162 marriageable girls constantly less than that of marriageable boys, so that there

423 The lack of formal title to their land under the Venezuelan legal system
648 presents, for the moment, no special problem as regards land used for dwelling, farming, hunting, and fishing. There is no pressure on such land and at present no tendency by non-Kamarakotos to compete for it, although a colonization scheme such as has been suggested might suddenly present the Indians with a very serious and perhaps, for them, insoluble problem. They are, however, 316 already aware of possible difficulty as regards title to the gold deposits in their 423 territory, even though the gold so far discovered has not been sufficient to 643 cause a serious invasion of their remote region. Their reasoned attitude regarding [648] this is to establish title to the gold deposits for the cacique. In their consideration he is not, however, a personal owner but only a custodian on behalf of the whole group, just as household property can be considered as belonging, in a rather vague but real sense, to the head of the household but is freely used by all its members. There is a rather close analogy to the crown lands of a constitutional monarchy, where title is said to belong to the king but he is in fact an owner only as he represents the state as a whole and the property is actually communal.

This communal nature of the mines that "belong" to the cacique is shown in practice by the fact that any adult male member of the tribe has the right of working the mines and that the gold found by any man becomes his personal property without any deduction of royalty, rental, or tribute. Even further than this, if a particularly rich pocket is discovered it is customary to notify the other members of the tribe so that anyone who wishes to can share in it.

422 Movable possessions are more rigidly owned than is land and in this case
425 the ownership is usually to be considered as purely personal and not as communal even in the sense that household lands belong to the family group rather than specifically to the to⁹-esa⁹ as an individual. Here the principles of ownership arising from manufacture, as between different households, and from use, [437] as within a household, are dominant. Thus a new hammock made by a woman of a given household is the property of that household and its barter to another group may be by the maker or by the to⁹-esa⁹ as representing the household, but if it is assigned to and used by a particular member of the household, it is [437] his, or her, personal property. So, too, in barter or purchase of goods from [439] other tribes or from Venezuelans, this may be done on a purely personal basis or by the to⁹-esa⁹ for his household and subsequent personal ownership is established by the individual who uses the object or material in question.

[126] In our trading with the Indians, it was noteworthy, for instance, that a basket made, of course, by a man but already in use by a woman, was not sold except with the woman's consent and that the price was generally payable to her or for her benefit. On the other hand, a new basket was sold by and for the 461 maker. In paying for labor, the women generally spent the sums due them on 465 themselves and on the young children, not for their husbands. Commonly a man [593] would trade his labor for goods for his family rather than for himself.

461 would trade his labor for goods for his family rather than for himself. Among
465 the Indians themselves the employment of labor is not uncommon and is paid
[472] either by labor in return or by goods, such as baskets or other common objects of trade. For instance one man may definitely employ another (outside his household — those in the household are of course obligated to help freely) to help erect his house and in return will do an equivalent amount of work for the man employed or will give him an equitable amount of food, drink, or articles of trade. This practice contains the germs of definite class differentiation into employees and laborers, but such differentiation has not at all occurred as yet.
[556] Generally speaking, there is no pronounced difference in wealth between different households and no one man is much more likely to be an employer than an employee.

Crime and Punishment.

173 According to present statements, the ancient penal code of the tribe, if
673 an indefinite and unwritten customary handling of the problem of crime can be
[681] so called, recognized basically only one crime, that of being hopelessly undesirable, and one punishment, death. Judgment as to the undesirability of a
[682] [685] member of the tribe was based on the commission of antisocial actions, among
173 692 which unjustified murder, violation of fishing rights, and habitual thievery were specifically mentioned. A household might take matters into its own
643 [627] hands, but this was considered undesirable and the regular, one might say the truly legal, procedure was to lay the complaint before the cacique who judged its accuracy and gravity, but apparently without holding anything resembling
[696] a formal hearing or trial. If he condemned the criminal, he assigned the duty of executing him to any members of the tribe, such as the male complainants, and the sentence was carried out without further formality as soon as opportunity presented.

674 At present, the Indians say, crime is so nearly unknown that no regular
[681] system of punishment is required. It is easy to believe that serious crime is
[157] extremely rare as the amity of the Kamarakotos is amazing. Even when they
[273] were violently drunk no quarreling was seen, still less any attempts at physical injury. They are, however, human and it is incredible that no crime ever is
[178] committed. From answers to hypothetical questions as to what would be done if a crime should occur, it is evident that the old code is still considered natural and just and I have no doubt that it would be, and probably is, still applied if
685 occasion arises. Specifically, it was stated that unprovoked murder and serious
[682] violation of fishing rights merit death and that this should be administered un-
[696] der direction of the cacique but might well be undertaken by the injured house-
[627] hold on its own initiative. Theft, on the other hand, is now considered theoretically (and probably also in practice although no specific instance could be